DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 387 FL 009 569

AUTHOR	Johnson, Carol
TITLE	Mechanical Dictations. TEAL Occasional Papers, Vol. 2, 1978.
INSTITUTION	British Columbia Association of Teachers of English as an Additional Language, Vancouver.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Maureen C. Sawkins, British Columbia Association of TEAL, c/o King Edward Campus, V.C.C., 2750 Oak St., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada ($2.50 Canadian plus $.50 postage)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Audiolingual Skills; Aural Learning; *Autoinstructional Aids; *English (Second Language); *Individualized Instruction; *Language Instruction; Language Skills; Oral Reading; Programed Units; Reading Assignments; Secondary Education; Second Language Learning; *Teaching Methods; *Units of Study; Writing Exercises
IDENTIFIERS	*Dictation Tasks

ABSTRACT

One of the major problems of secondary school second language teachers in British Columbia is providing work that a student can do individually, leaving the teacher free for other students. It is rare that individual work includes oral-aural practice. A teaching method is presented that allows individualized instruction without sacrificing oral-aural practice. The use of dictation with comprehensive work units is described. The preparation of an instruction card or checklist describing in detail the steps a student should follow to complete a unit of work is outlined, and a sample card format or checklist is included. This technique, called "mechical dictation," can be done at the student's own speed. It provides writing, reading, and oral-aural practice and is self-correcting. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED157387

MECHANICAL DICTATIONS

CAROL JOHNSON

Carol Johnson was trained to teach English and E.S.L. at U.B.C., and currently works at Britannia Secondary School in Vancouver. She is teaching Transitional English to secondary students of all ages in an English Learning Centre, where she is part of a team of two teachers and an assistant. Carol plans all the oral work. She is particularly interested in developing methods to promote oral fluency among second language learners.

One of the major problems facing second language teachers in secondary schools in B. C. who are trying to provide a reasonable amount of individualization in their programs, is the difficulty of setting work that a student can do himself, leaving the teacher free for other students. Even if a teacher can set individual work, it is rare that this work can include oral-aural practice.

The method I am about to outline I have used with transitional students at all levels of secondary schooling. I don't feel that it would be suitable for recent arrivals in E.S.L. classes, but it is very possible that by varying the material it could be used with adults or intermediate level children in elementary schools at a transitional stage of language learning. By transitional I mean that students are functioning in English, but still require extra help and support in the form of transitional classes or attendance in a Language Centre.

This paper will elaborate on one attempt to solve the problem of individualized instruction without sacrificing oral-aural practice. For reasons that will become clear as this explanation unfolds, I have christened my little invention "mechanical dictation."

I am a great believer in the value of dictation in teaching second language. I have used dictation a great

FL009569

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Maureen Sawkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

deal in my classroom, and I have observed that regular practice in taking unseen dictations steadily improves the ability of a student in taking further unseen dictations, which points to improved phonetic discrimination as well as improved ability to use vocabulary and grammar. For a student, taking dictation is a way of integrating all the language skills except speaking. If the students correct their own and each other's work, dictation is also a good way of pinpointing the habitual errors that individuals make.

As I have now accounted for the use of "dictation" in my title, let me now explain the use of the word "mechanical". In this special sense, and for this limited function, the teacher can entrust his or her work to a machine, in this case the language master.

The teacher takes time before class to prepare several comprehensive units of work. Once they are prepared, they can be used over and over again by different students and checked in a few seconds after each use by a teacher or assistant.

The first thing the teacher needs to prepare is a clear instruction card, which describes in detail all the steps a student will have to follow in order to complete a unit of work. If it seems expedient, the teacher can use a student check list for this, and have the student initial each step as he completes it, as well as doing the written work later, on the same piece of paper. Whether she uses the check list or a general instruction card, or begins with a check list and goes on to a general instruction card after the students are familiar with the method, will depend on the preference of the teacher. To decide which method to use, she will need to reflect on the general maturity level of the students and their ability to follow instructions.

The instruction card or mimeographed check list would look something like this:

STEP 1: Read these instructions right through before beginning.

STEP II: Listen to each of the language master cards as many times as necessary for you to understand exactly what is being said. Be sure you understand everything perfectly.

STEP III: Go back to the first language master card and record it on the student track. Listen to your recording and check it against the instructor track. This is very important. Repeat with each of the other cards. Then write each sentence down on your paper.

STEP IV: Look at your sentences as they are written on your paper. Arrange them in order by number, and then re-write them in the correct order, so that they form a story.

STEP V: Listen to the language master cards again, and arrange them in the same order as your written story. Fasten them together with an elastic band.

STEP VI: Get out the script of your story, and check it against your version. If you have made errors putting the story in order, try to discover why. Then put away the script and follow steps 2-6 again. If your story is in order but you have made grammatical errors, mark them on your copy of the story and write the corrected versions underneath.

STEP VII: If you have made more than ten grammatical errors, re-write the story from the master script, directly under your first version, being careful not to repeat any of your errors. If you have made fewer than ten errors, go on to STEP VIII.

STEP VIII: Go back and listen to the student track of the language master cards in the order in which you have arranged them, following your corrected script and checking for pronunciation errors.

Re-record any card with errors.

You are finished. Hand in your paper, cards and script.

ALTERNATIVE STEP: If the teacher feels it is better, she may allow the students to read the script before STEP II, put it away and continue with the listening; or the students could have the option of reading the script after STEP II if there was something they didn't understand. The teacher may find it expedient to prepare several sets of instructions, implementing the variations mentioned, or different ones if she wishes, and the exact method could be chosen on the basis of the needs of the student.

As in regular dictations, the written material should be slightly easier than the student is able to handle when reading. The material can vary from four or five sentences long to ten or even more. Students can start with short selections, and as they gain ability to handle them, they can advance to longer ones. Humourous or cultural choices are obvious, and if the scripts can be prepared with cartoons or drawings, it will aid understanding. Also, laminated scripts and instruction cards last longer.

Since the students will be expected to unscramble them, the stories should have a definite order. When preparing scripts, check for linguistic clues of order. The language master cards should be recorded on the instructor track of blank cards, with no visual clues provided. The recording can be the teacher's voice, or an unknown voice. Each card should have only one sentence recorded on it, which will limit the length and complexity.

It is easy for the teacher to check the cards, rescramble them for the next student, and then to check the written work from the script. It is also possible for her to write a note or comment on the student's written sheet if she wishes. This method is suitable for students who

have enough language and enough confidence to work on their own. It is beneficial for the students to be able to take the "mechanical dictations" at their own speed, and to have privacy and time to perfect their pronunciation. "Mechanical Dictation" provides practice in writing, reading, and self-correcting along with the oral-aural practice.

T E A L

Occasional Papers

2 1978

CONTENTS

Sawkins, Maureen. Foreword

1 Barnes, Bruce. First Language Literacy and Second Language Learning. 6-78-90

10 Marshall, Diane. Implications for Working with New Canadians. 6-78-91

19 Aitken, Kenneth G. Measuring Listening Comprehension in English as a Second Language. 6-78-92

27 Bovee, Bruce. Hints On Teaching English To Spanish Speakers. 6-78-93

32 Essig, Janet. Running All Our Words Together Naturally or Flowing Rivers Versus Raindrop Speech. 6-78-94

44 Benetti, Jean. Techniques for Introducing the Newspaper to ESL Students. 6-78-95

53 Johnson, Carol. Mechanical Dictations. 6-78-96

58 Salzmann, Herbert. Writing as Self-Discovery: Teaching Writing Skills to Non-Native Speakers. 6-78-97

70 Yildiz, Nancy. Practical Activities that Focus on the Decision-Making Process. 6-78-98

80 Brown, David J. Some Thoughts on Teacher Training in ESL. 6-78-99

TEAL OCCASIONAL PAPERS

VOLUME TWO 1978

BC ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

COMPILED BY MAUREEN SAWKINS